

**Western Governors Association Annual Meeting
June 28-30, 2013, Park City, Utah**

New Mexico Gov. Martinez

Issue: Eastern Navajo Dine Against Uranium Mining (ENDAUM)

Background/Status:

The Eastern Navajo Dine Against Uranium Mining (ENDAUM) and the Navajo Nation have requested termination of an aquifer exemption approved in 1989 by EPA Region 6. This exemption was approved during the processing of an underground injection control permit sought by Hydro Resources, Inc (HRI), to conduct *in situ* leach uranium mining in the eastern portion of Navajo Nation Indian Country. HRI is currently seeking permit renewal and has a pending renewal application with the New Mexico Environment Department (NMED).

Message:

- ENDAUM, Navajo Nation, and NMED are concerned that the reclamation and restoration of groundwater in the mining area will not be sufficient under State standards.
- The Navajo community has endured a legacy of severe negative health impacts from past uranium mining operations. ENDAUM is one of several community groups actively opposing the mining activity, which the community believes threatens the only source of drinking water for the people living in the eastern Navajo area.
- EPA Region is still reviewing the request from ENDAUM and Navajo Nation to terminate the aquifer exemption.
- Regional Administrator Ron Curry met with ENDAUM and other tribal stakeholders in June 2013 to discuss their concerns and tour sites related to uranium mining.

Contact: Jeannine Hale, 214-665-2136 or Randy Gee 214-665-8355

Issue: Grants Uranium Mining District

Background/Status:

The Grants Mining District comprises an area of 100 miles by 25 miles where primary uranium extraction and production activities occurred in New Mexico from the 1950s to the late 1980s. There are 97 legacy uranium mines in the district with the potential for physical hazards such as open adits and shafts, and for potential releases of hazardous substances (primarily radionuclides and metals) to soil, surface water, and ground water. The following are included in the district:

- The Jackpile Mine, once the world's largest open pit uranium mine, is located on the Pueblo of Laguna near the village of Pagate and operated from 1953 to 1982. The site was proposed to the EPA National Priorities List (NPL) of Superfund Sites in March 2012, and final listing is anticipated in October 2013.
- Properties located on the Pueblo of Acoma are scheduled to be inspected by EPA Region for radioactive materials in June 2013. Many tribal members worked in uranium mines near the pueblo, and those miners may have brought radioactive materials home.

- The Northeast Church Rock and United Nuclear Corporation sites are located on and near the southern border of Navajo tribal lands respectively.

Message:

- A 5-Year Plan was developed by federal, state and tribal agencies in 2010 that is intended to compile, coordinate and guide all activities contributing to the identification and eventual cleanup of contamination from these legacy mining and milling activities to maximize efforts and resources.
- EPA Region 6 is actively working with community groups such as the Eastern Navajo Dine Against Uranium Mining (ENDAUM) and the Multicultural Alliance for a Safe Environment (MASE) to address legacy uranium mining issues.

Contact: Jeannine Hale, 214-665-2136 or Randy Gee 214-665-8355

Issue: Drought and New Mexico Wildfires

Background/Status:

This year is New Mexico's third consecutive year of drought, and the state has already begun to experience wildfires. In 2011, the Las Conchas Wildfire was the largest in New Mexico history, at approximately 124,000 acres. Significant concerns about the impact on Los Alamos National Laboratory (LANL) and potential releases of radioactive waste and materials into surrounding communities, including tribal communities, prompted emergency response operations from EPA Region 6, to include air sampling and ASPECT monitoring missions.

Message:

- New Mexico wildfires can threaten Native American cultural and sacred sites. Emergency response efforts should include close coordination with impacted pueblos and tribal officials.
- EPA works with tribes on a government-to-government basis to protect the land, air, and water in Indian country.

Contact: Jeannine Hale, 214-665-2136 or Randy Gee 214-665-8355

Oklahoma Gov. Fallin

Issue: Osage County Oil and Gas Development

Background/Status: The Osage Nation owns a mineral reserve spanning Osage County. Osage County has been the subject of controversy over longstanding environmental and public health concerns over oil and natural gas production. Along with recent citizen complaints on hydrogen sulfide emissions, landowners are seeking to have federal regulations on oil and gas activity in Osage County changed through the Osage Negotiated Rulemaking Committee of the Bureau of Indian Affairs – Eastern Oklahoma Region.

Message:

- Staff from EPA Region 6 have met with the Houston Advanced Research Center and Bureau of Indian Affairs regarding oil and gas development in Osage County and concerns regarding safety to human health and the environment.
- EPA Region 6 will work with the Osage Nation to explore options for assisting the tribe in capacity building and training to address complaints and concerns expressed. The Region will also continue to coordinate with the Bureau of Indian Affairs and Oklahoma agencies on this issue.

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